

What Really Matters to Hotel Guests: A Study of Guest Reviews of 3 Star Hotels in Bangkok

Sonia Khan*

Abstract *The purpose of the study is to investigate the user-generated content of guests' hotel reviews available on TripAdvisor to identify the most scrutinized and discussed dimensions of a hotel by hotel guests. The results reveal that the 'room', 'staff', hotel 'transport connectivity', 'food', and 'proximity' to other shopping and eating outlets, are the main concerns addressed by guests either as 'compliments' or 'complaints' in their word-of-mouth feedback. The research concludes that in a highly competitive hotel business environment an insight into guest reviews is vital for hoteliers to lay out a road map for improving the various services on offer in an accommodation property. The findings are also suggestive of the importance for hoteliers to continuously monitor the hugely available and easily accessible electronic guest feedback/electronic word of mouth (eWOM), that in the present electronic era, travels extremely fast, far and wide, critically influencing the image and sales of a hotel.*

Keywords: *User Generated Content, Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM), Hotel Reviews, TripAdvisor*

INTRODUCTION

Credited to technology, the evolution of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has tremendously changed both marketing and consumer behavior. The importance of eWOM is evinced in the fact that it is extremely fast, has a wide reach, involves a large community, and offers 'third party, unbiased opinions' on a wide variety of products and services available for customers. In the form of customer 'user-generated content' (UGC), eWOM exists in various forms, like blogs, websites, forums and customer review sites. Among other things, eWOM nowadays plays a significant role in travel consumption as well. During travel planning, the present day 'educated', 'aware', 'well-off', 'fastidious' and 'technology enabled' tourist (who seeks value for money) is prompted to carry out an extensive search of the eWOM available on online social media in order to widely consult consumer generated product and service reviews before finally making a purchase/consumption decision (Chung and Buhalis, 2008; Dellarocas, 2003; Stringam and

Gerdes, 2010). Therefore, word-of-mouth communication plays a vital role in influencing consumption decisions of tourists (Cox et al., 2009; Gretzel and Yoo, 2008; McCarthy et al., 2010). In travel consumption, online travel websites have become increasingly popular as they provide an abundance of 'information', 'alternatives', and 'reviews' about every aspect of travel to a destination (Litvin et al., 2008; Ong, 2012; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). To get an idea about any travel product, service or destination, 'third party referrals' in the form of tourist generated reviews are curiously sought by prospective customers/tourists on online review platforms before making an individual choice for purchase.

'Accommodation' as a prime component of a tourist's journey attracts keen attention during travel planning. The flourishing accommodation industry has accounted for immense popularity of hotel booking and hotel review websites on the online media, viz. TripAdvisor.com, Booking.com, Expedia.com, and Priceline.com, among others (Mauri and Minazzi, 2013, O'Connor, 2008, 2010; Ye

* Assistant Professor, Tourism, IVS, H.P. University, Summer Hill, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh, India.
Email: Khansonia@hotmail.com

et al. 2011). User feedback available on such websites in the form of hotel reviews (from tourists who have experienced stay in different hotel properties) provides interesting insight into the various ‘general’ and ‘specific’ (salient/minute) dimensions/attributes of a hotel that significantly matter to tourists. For prospective customers, the reviews, either positive or negative, help in formulating some idea about what to expect from different hotels and thus help in deciding on a final booking choice.

Different hotel booking and review websites accord different rankings to hotels on a variety of criteria extracted through guest reviews. The most commonly considered factors in according rankings to hotel properties are ‘amenities/facilities’, ‘location’ and ‘staff performance’. However, ‘specific’ rating/ranking may take the form of any of the following: a) a single ‘overall’ qualitative rating of a property described through adjectives like ‘excellent’, ‘very good’, ‘average’, ‘poor’ and ‘terrible’ (TripAdvisor, Makemytrip.com); an independent rating on a point rating scale of 1-5, or 1-10, for every individual attribute of the property, e.g. ‘cleanliness’, ‘comfort’, ‘location’, ‘facilities’, ‘staff’, ‘value for money’, ‘free wifi’ etc. (e.g. Booking.co, Virtualtourist.com); or else a combination of a qualitative description i.e. that conveys the property in a nutshell, along with a point rating of individual attribute (e.g. Location, cleanliness etc.) of the property (e.g. Agoda.com). Regardless of the ratings accorded by various websites to hotels on various attributes, potential customers are likely to browse through guest reviews to get a better understanding of a hotel from a ‘real’ customer’s first hand feedback, in order to find out ‘what exactly’ has left previous customers ‘satisfied’ or ‘dissatisfied’ with their stay in the same.

In view of the importance of customer generated feedback/reviews for purchase and consumption decisions of future customers, this study aims to investigate the content of hotel feedback posted by guests in the form of hotel reviews. The aim is to identify the particular salient attributes of a hotel that are most discussed in reviews by guests, indirectly signifying the attribute’s critical importance both for guests and for hotel managers. The study focuses on 3 Star hotel properties located in city centre Bangkok.

BACKGROUND

Electronic technology has transformed the traditional, ‘in person’ word-of-mouth communication to a virtual/‘electronic word-of-mouth’ (eWOM) communication. The tech savvy consumers nowadays extensively use e-technology to consult online information for making their consumption decisions as well as to candidly ‘make public’, on the online media, their consumption experiences of a wide variety of products and services. The critical role of the 24/7 available eWOM in the form of user generated content has attracted

wide attention in marketing and consumer research in the last decade (Albuquerque et al., 2012; Akehurst, 2009; Brown et al, 2007; Chatterjee, 2001; Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; Dellarocas, 2003; Dwyer, 2007; Kozinets et al., 2010; Schindler and Bickart, 2012). The e-content feedback available for consultation to the global market plays a critical role in influencing sales of products and services (Ayeh et al., 2013; Ye et al. 2011; Ye, Law and Gu, 2009). In the context of hospitality and tourism, the user generated eWOM is available aplenty online in the form of consumer written experiences of accommodation, transport, attractions, food and beverage outlets and personal accounts of travel to various destinations. Hence the influence of eWOM on travel consumption decisions of prospective consumers is fast firming its roots as a new area in tourism research. The role of guest reviews in influencing hotel sales has already emerged an aspect of interest in academic investigation (Aureli et al., 2014; Barreda and Bilgihan, 2013; Sparks and Browning, 2011; Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009; Willams et al. 2010). An insight into guest reviews of hotels suggests that every review communicates a holistic evaluation of an individual’s guests stay experience at a particular property. This individual experience is a ‘subjective’ assessment of a wide number of hotel features that include both ‘functional/core’ and ‘peripheral/service’ attributes (Choi and Chu, 2001; Dolnicar and Otter, 2003). The reviews indicate that particularly with regard to hotels, the evaluation of the stay experience is usually in relation to the ‘price’ paid for the hotel room, and the ‘pre-experience image’ of the hotel that the consumer came with.

The importance of the content of hotel review is vital both for customers and suppliers. While the review content has a bearing on influencing a customer’s hotel choice, it also contributes to influencing the reputation of the hotel, eventually effecting future sales (Chatterjee, 2001; Lee, Park and Han, 2008; Park and Allen, 2013; Willemsen et al., 2011; Ye et al., 2011). Broadly the guest reviews can be classified into ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ (Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009). A hotel that provides a satisfactory experience or comes ‘up to’ or ‘beyond’ expectations secures positive reviews, while one that ‘fails the expectations’ or else ‘disappoints’ the guests, leads to negative reviews.

The examination of the discourse of reviews suggests that a guest expresses his/her ‘pleasure’ or ‘displeasure’ with a hotel either through the use of bare minimum ‘few words’ of approval (e.g. ‘excellent’, ‘will revisit’), disapproval (e.g. ‘poor’), warning (e.g. ‘never again’), or else, writes a detailed explanation that addresses every ‘minute detail’ of the hotel’s facilities and services which significantly mattered to him/her. Therefore the content of reviews is significantly important for prospective consumers. Though ample research has explored the ‘impact’ of online reviews on hotel sales (Aureli et al., 2014; O’Connor 2010; Ogut and

Tas, 2012; Schindler and Bickart, 2012. Ye et al., 2009) not much research has delved into examining the actual ‘content’ of reviews with the aim to explore what particular aspects guests talk about in their feedback of hotels. In this context, Barreda and Bilgihan’s (2013) research is one pioneer work that has analyzed the content of hotel reviews to identify the most positively and negatively addressed aspects of a hotel stay. Their findings highlight that hotel ‘cleanliness’, ‘location’ and ‘staff behavior’, are the top themes addressed in guest reviews. In another study in this area, Ekiz et al. (2012) investigated the complaining behavior of guests in hotel reviews to identify the top themes guests usually complain about. On similar lines, Khoo-Lattimore and Ekiz (2014) also examined the nature of compliments received by luxury hotels in Malaysia. The findings of these two studies suggest that the ‘room’, ‘staff’, and ‘location’ are some of the top themes in a hotel that attract huge compliments and complaints in guest reviews. Other than these three studies, research examining the content of hotel guest reviews remains apparently scarce.

In light of the widely accessible and available, yet strikingly less investigated user generated content of guests reviews of hotels on the online media, this study attempts to identify the key dimensions/attributes of a hotel most frequently addressed in guest feedback.

METHODOLOGY

Content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004; Pan et al., 2007) proves to be the best way of understanding the excessive qualitative data available on tourism and hospitality services existing in the form of suppliers’ marketing content, or customers’ user generated content, on travel planning websites, travel blogs, discussions forums and travel review websites.

This study employed content analysis on the user generated qualitative content (i.e. hotel reviews) available on ‘TripAdvisor.com’. TripAdvisor was chosen for conducting the study as it has become a globally popular platform that offers information and advice to tourists on all components of travel. With respect to hotels, the importance of TripAdvisor, is rightly pointed out by Rodriguez (2014) who cites a survey conducted by PhoCusWright in 2014, which reveals that at least ‘three-fourths’ of all travelers use TripAdvisor before actually booking a hotel.

On TripAdvisor, reviews of hotels in Bangkok city were chosen for data collection. The interest in Bangkok city hotels stemmed from the researcher’s travel to Bangkok, prior to which the researcher widely consulted TripAdvisor hotel

reviews for making a decision of booking a particular hotel. To identify a particular dataset for conducting the study, the following process was undertaken. On TripAdvisor.com, the researcher first carried out a search for ‘Hotels in Bangkok’. As TripAdvisor provides innumerable reviews of hundreds of hotels in any city, the researcher decided to narrow down the returned results of Bangkok hotels on two specific criteria i.e. a). *Star category* - ‘3 Star’, and b). *Location*, - ‘City Centre’. Thereafter, the returned results of ‘3 Star City Centre hotels’ in Bangkok were sorted by ‘ranking’. The finally resulting top ‘10 hotels’ were selected for data collection, viz. *Holiday Inn Express, Villa Phra Sumen, Smart Suites, City Point Hotel, On 8 Sukhumvit, Salem City Hotel, Royal View Resort, Holiday Inn Express, Salil Hotel Sukhumvit* and *Glow Trinity Silom*.

In the first instance, the reviews were read over to get an overview about the subject matter written in the guest feedback. Reading over the reviews the widely mentioned prime dimensions were identified and each was assigned a numeric code in multiples of 2, i.e. *Room (2) and/or Bathroom (2a), Staff (4), Breakfast (6), Amenities/Services (8), Transport Connectivity (10), Proximity to Conveniences (12), Overall Stay Experience (14), Others (16)*. For data recording of each of the 20 hotels in the study, 20 tabulated excel sheets (one for each hotel) were assigned in excel. Each sheet for each hotel, comprised 20 rows (i.e. one row for each review script) and 2 columns i.e. +ive (positive) and –ive (negative). For data recording, reviews of each of the 10 hotels were accessed one by one, independently. For each hotel, the researcher read 20 reviews scripts (posted from most current to older ones in sequence). Reading each review script the particular dimension/s (attributes) addressed was extracted and depending upon whether it was ‘positively’ or ‘negatively’ mentioned, its code was recorded in the respective +ive or –ive column of the excel sheet for the particular hotel. In addition, any noteworthy comments/ words describing a specific dimension were also made note of in the particular excel sheet. In all, 200 reviews (n=200: i.e. 10 hotels, x 20 reviews), served as data. Finally, on the lines of a word frequency analysis, similar to one adopted by Boon et al., (2014) the researcher added up the frequency of mention of every dimension (code) through its total count, indicating its significance for the hotel guests.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The ensuing discussion elaborates the critically important dimensions 3 Star hotels in Bangkok city centre, as discussed in guest reviews. Table 1, reveals the most frequently discussed dimension in order of importance.

Table 1: Most Discussed Hotel Dimensions in Guest Reviews

	Dimension (code)	Positive (+ive)	Negative (-ive)	Total Frequency
1	Room (2) and Bathroom (2a)	114	9	123
2	Staff (4)	15	8	23
3	Transport Connectivity (10)	83	8	91
4	Breakfast (6)	71	0	71
5	Proximity to Conveniences (12) Stores, Street Food and Shopping Malls	42	23	65
6	Stay Experience (14)	48	4	52
7	Amenities/Services (8)	35	2	37
8	Others (16)	9	7	16
		17	7	24

In the following discussion each dimension is addressed individually, highlighting both its positive and negative aspects taken serious note of by hotel guests.

Room and Bathroom

Justifying that for tourists a tourism accommodation unit is a 'home away from home', the hotel 'room' is the most commented upon dimension (Table 2).

Regardless of where a hotel is located or what the room tariff is, the guest is very careful in deciding upon booking a hotel that offers a good 'room'. In the largest number of reviews a 'clean', 'fresh' and 'airy' room has been highly appreciated by guests. In several instances, the room is also described as 'comfortable'.

Table 2: Room and its Description

Room (code 2)	Positive	Negative
Descriptive words	Clean, Fresh, Airy, Comfortable, Spacious/Big, Modern, Soft & Hard Bed Pillows	Dirty, No Soundproofing, Poor Aircon (too cool/not cool), No windows
Frequency of mention	114	9
Total = 123		

The comments reveal that room 'size' matters and 'spacious/big' rooms make the guests happy, as there is enough space to keep the luggage and move about freely. It is also interesting to learn that nowadays guests desire 'modern' amenities, furnishings and fixtures in the room. With respect to comfort, the availability of a choice of 'soft' and 'hard' pillows is seen especially mentioned and appreciated in a few reviews.

The negative comments about the room are limited to a few instances where the guests have noticed the room to be 'dirty' or shabby, reflecting on poor housekeeping and a callous attitude of the management. Poor 'soundproofing' of the room partitioning seems to be another irritant, causing disturbance particularly at odd hours, with noise coming from the adjacent room/s. A poor functioning 'Aircon'

(i.e. not cool enough, extra cool, or at times noisy), is also complained about. Besides, a room without a window, closed to natural light and view, reflects disappointment in guests' feedback.

The 'Bathroom/Washroom', an equally important part of the room, attracts special scrutiny by guests. Table 2a, reveals the positive and negative descriptions of the bathroom. 'Big/spacious' and 'clean' bathrooms with a 'good shower' and a good 'water pressure' are most appreciated by guests. In modern day bathrooms, guests usually desire a 'shower chamber', or the shower area to be separated with a shower curtain or glass partitioning that can prevent the whole bathroom getting wet and messy with shower water. Guests are also highly pleased with the availability of 'warm/hot water'.

Table 2a: Bathroom and its Description

Bathroom (code 2a)	Positive	Negative
Descriptive words	Spacious, Clean, Tub, Good Shower, Shower Chamber, Hot Water, Bathtub	Small, No Shower Chamber/Curtains, No Detachable Shower, No hot water, Inconsistency of Hot and Cold Water, No Exhaust Fan
Frequency of mention	15	8
Total=23		

Besides, if the washroom has a ‘bathtub’ to soak in for relaxation and refreshing the tired body, it is definitely considered a luxury that makes guests happy to report positive feedback.

Displeasure with the washroom is evident if it is ‘too small’ in size, does not have an ‘exhaust fan’, or else, does not have a separate partitioned bathing area. Some guests are unhappy with ‘fixed showers’, while others complain of ‘unavailability of hot water’ or ‘inconsistency of hot and cold water’.

Staff

In tourism as a service industry, the human aspect of service ‘staff’ is vital to guest satisfaction. Therefore, staff behavior attracts significant attention of guests as the second most reported feature in reviews (Table 3).

Table 3: Staff and its Description

Staff (code 4)	Positive	Negative
Descriptive words	Friendly, Welcoming, Efficient, Helpful, English Speaking	Cold, Rude, Misbehavior
Frequency of mention	83	8
Total = 91		

Guests desire ‘good’ and ‘welcoming’ behavior from host staff. Moreover, as there is one-to-one personal interaction between frontline employees and guests, the grooming, behavior, personality traits and communication skills of the staff are very closely scrutinized by guests. The study results reveal that a pleasing personality, good behavior, ‘friendly’ and ‘welcoming’ attitude and ‘efficient’ handling of guest formalities by the staff contribute highly to guest satisfaction and dissemination of a positive word-of-mouth. Guests feel welcome and at ease especially when they find the staff attentive and ‘helpful’. The ability of the local hotel staff to communicate in ‘English’ (particularly in a non-English speaking country) is highly appreciated and considered a ‘relief’, by international English speaking guests.

On the other hand, poor staff behavior notably results in a strong negative word-of-mouth. No guest returns happy from a hotel if not accorded proper respect and attention. In some reviews, guests have particularly pointed out to the ‘rude’ and ‘cold’ behavior, or else ‘misbehavior’ of staff, as highly disappointing.

Transport Connectivity

Guest wish to be mobile and move around easily at the destination visited. As hiring taxis throughout the stay may prove expensive, most budget tourists/guests, are very careful about choosing a hotel ‘from’ and ‘to’ which, a

number of local modes of ‘transport connectivity’ around the city are easily available.

Table 4: Transport Connectivity and its Description

Transport Connectivity (code 10)	Positive	Negative
Descriptive words	Close to Train Station, Easy to find Auto Rickshaw/ Taxi	-----
Frequency of mention	71	0
Total = 71		

Hence, location of a hotel in terms of ‘access to transport’ in order to get ‘in and around’ the destination is identified as the third most important dimension addressed in hotel reviews (Table 4). In this study, location was consciously neutralized as a separate dimension as only 3 Star ‘city centre’ located hotels have been narrowed down as dataset. The comments mentioning accessibility and availability of transport ‘from’ and ‘to’ the hotel are taken into view. Positive mention of the hotel is noted for hotels located in convenient ‘walking distance’ to the ‘train station’ (i.e. metro or sky train/monorail). Guests also often mention of the ease of availability of inexpensive ‘three-wheelers’ or ‘auto rickshaws’ (*tuk tuk*) right outside the hotel. A frequent mention in reviews is the mention of ample ‘taxis’ plying around hotels. In this study, no negative comments on transport connectivity were found, indicating that in city center Bangkok, transport accessibility/availability is not a problem for hotels.

Breakfast

‘Breakfast’, is mentioned as the fourth most talked about hotel dimension. It is apparent that if breakfast is available at the property itself, or included in the stay, the guest does not have to worry about ‘where’ to eat. Tourists are usually happy booking hotels that offer ‘bed and breakfast’.

Table 5: Breakfast and its Description

Breakfast (code 6)	Positive	Negative
Descriptive words	Good, Variety, Filling, Quantity, Proper Breakfast Timings	Poor, No selection, Not Worth the Price, Small Restaurant
Frequency of mention	42	23
Total=65		

The results (Table 5) indicate that ‘variety’ and ‘quality’ of breakfast is important for guests as most hotel properties

offer breakfast inclusive of room tariff. A spread of a wide variety of breakfast items is definitely preferred over a limited selection. Moreover guests do not like the same items be on menu but are happy with something different each day. Besides for international guests in Asian countries, a hotel offering the option of both ‘Western’ and ‘Asian’ cuisine definitely has an edge in pleasing the guests. The ‘quantity’ of breakfast to feed all mouths also matters. A ‘filling’ breakfast spread available in good quantity is an important consideration as it does away with the worry of scramble for food. Positive remarks about breakfast have a special mention of ‘breakfast timings’ stretched over the duration of a couple of hours, especially from as early as ‘6.30 a.m. to 10 a.m. in the morning’. Such a timing is considered most desirable as it suits both the early and late risers and is especially suitable for tourists, who on the day of check-out, have a morning/forenoon transport departure, and do not have to skip breakfast. Stretched breakfast hours also helps avoid the rush of all guests coming in together into the restaurant.

Quite a few negative mentions are also suggestive of the importance of breakfast. Several guests are noted to have complained about ‘poor’ breakfast with ‘limited/no selection’ of items on offer. Guests find the lack of variety as ‘monotonous’, often complaining of going hungry especially, when on account of personal likes/dislikes, health, or religious reasons, they have reservations about eating whatever limited is available on menu. Instances of complaints are also seen of breakfast ‘not worth the price’. A few reviews also express disappointment with the hotel restaurant being ‘too small’, leaving the people waiting for their turn to find a table. The reviews mentioning breakfast thus signify the importance of the morning meal that most guests have opted and already paid for, at the time of their hotel booking.

Proximity to Conveniences

Many positive mentions in reviews are found for hotels that tend to be located in close vicinity to conveniences and utilities like retail shops, supermarkets, eating outlets, shopping and entertainment facilities. These comments highlight the importance of proximity to conveniences as another significantly important dimension (Table 6).

Table 6: Proximity to Conveniences and its Description

Proximity to Conveniences (12)	Positive	Negative
Descriptive words	Close to Street Food, Restaurants, McDonald, 7-Eleven, Convenience Stores, Shopping Malls	Noisy
Frequency of mention	48	4
Total=52		

As food in a hotel restaurant is usually believed to be expensive, guests may avoid eating meals in the hotel. Moreover, travelling as tourists, people like to try out the local cuisine and authentic flavors available aplenty in the form of inexpensive street food. For others, who may not relish local food, availability of a variety of restaurants, or fast food global outlets like *Mc Donald*, *Burger King*, *Subway*, or *Pizza Hut*, are the most preferred ‘safe bets’ for an inexpensive and filling meal. Guests tend to write positively about hotels that are located in proximity to such food outlets. Convenience stores or supermarkets are also important for tourists as gauged through the script of reviews. In this study hotels located close to e.g. ‘7-Eleven’ are happily made mention of. For tourists interested in shopping (particularly at a shopping destination like Bangkok) a hotel property located close to ‘Shopping Malls’ attracts positive reviews.

However uneasiness with respect to hotels located next to markets and eating outlets is also reflected by several guests who point out to the ‘disturbance/noise’ resulting from the humdrum of activity, not allowing for rest, peace and quiet.

Stay Experience

The results reveal that some guests, instead of scrutinizing and commenting about each and every dimension, simply sum up the overall stay experience at a hotel in a few words.

Table 7. Stay Experience and its Description

Stay Experience (14)	Positive	Negative
Descriptive words	Good / Comfortable/ Excellent	Poor
Frequency of mention	35	2
Total=37		

The positive experience is conveyed in a nutshell often through words like ‘good’, ‘comfortable’ stay, or ‘excellent’ hotel (Table 7). Interestingly, only two strong negative comments are noted to express the complete dissatisfaction/extreme disappointment of the guest with a hotel, describing the hotel as ‘poor’, suggesting that it is definitely not recommend. Such negative feedback goes out as a serious warning signal for prospective guests and is particularly critical in terms of eWOM that travels fast, far and wide.

Services/Amenities

In a highly competitive environment, the key for success of any hotel is not merely to satisfy the guests but rather make them feel ‘delighted’. This can be achieved by anticipating and providing for every small need on the guest’s wish list.

Table 8. Services/Amenities and their Description

Services/ Amenities (8)	Positive	Negative
Descriptive words	Bellboys, Complimentary Water Bottles, Ironing Facility, Hair Dryer, Toiletries	No Concierge, No Complimentary Water Bottles, No Slippers, No Hangars, No Restock of Tea/ Coffee, No Towels
Frequency of mention	9	7
Total=16		

Though a decent sleeping accommodation (room) remains the core requirement of a guest, a hotel that goes out of its way to provide additional ‘frills and fancies’ to pamper guests definitely wins over the customers, and leaves them happy to recommend a property with pleasure.

Table 8, shows that guests have acknowledged with pleasure the presence of availability of bellboy service in certain hotels, as bellboys are a great assistance with luggage at the time of check-in and check-out. Guests also express pleasure when ‘complimentary water bottles’ are provided daily in the room. The availability of a stock of basic ‘toiletries’ (soap, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrush etc.), and ‘tea/coffee’ making facility in the room is also complimented. In addition, the availability of additional utility items like an ‘iron’ and/or ‘hairdryer’, in the room, have also been appreciated.

The absence of any such service/facility/utility item, strikingly disappoints the guests, and is negatively reported in reviews. In this study, the absence of ‘drinking water’ ‘slippers’, ‘hangars’, ‘towels’ and a lackadaisical attitude on part of the housekeeping in restocking ‘tea/coffee’ sachets is unhappily pointed out.

Other Features

In ‘other’ features (Table 9) the availability of ‘wifi/internet’ service and ‘security’ is appreciated in many reviews.

Table 9. Other Features and their Description

Others (16)	Positive	Negative
Descriptive words	Wifi, Security, Interior Decor	Poor wifi, Only 1 or 2 English Channels on TV
Frequency of mention	17	7
Total-24		

Nowadays the technology enabled ‘netizen’ tourist wishes to remain connected 24/7 with friends, family and work through internet technology, even during travel. For this

reason, the availability of wifi/internet connectivity is a very important feature sought by most guests.

While positive comments are noted for availability of good ‘wifi/internet’ connectivity, its non/poor availability is complained about in reviews. Additionally, some reviews make a special mention of presence of visible ‘security’ personnel and features in the hotel property, duly appreciated by guests. For a hotel property one script states that even mere access to a particular floor of the hotel is possible only with the ‘room key card’. Such security features are welcomed in present times of increasing security threats to tourists who are sought after as soft targets at tourist destinations. Compliment on the good ‘interior décor’ and ‘ambience’ of a hotel are seen in some reviews, creating a positive word-of-mouth for the property.

Some guest comments convey disappointment at the limited availability of just ‘one’ or ‘two’ English Channels’ on television. For the international and largely English speaking global tourists, this defeats the purpose of having a television in the room.

Thus, the above findings and discussion, addressing each dimension separately, provides a detailed insight into the significant dimensions of a hotel most frequently reported in word-of-mouth referrals through guest reviews.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The evaluation of the experience of a stay in a hotel is subjective and complex. While both tangible and service elements create the experience, the personal evaluation depends upon which particular dimension/s (attribute/s) are important for each individual guest (Parsuraman, Zeithmal and Berry, 1988; Yilmaz, 2009). Hence, the importance of any one specific dimension cannot be generalized by the hoteliers to be significant for all tourists (Dolnicar and Otter, 2003). The examination of the content of hotel reviews in this research demonstrates findings similar to that of Khoo-Lattimore and Ekiz (2014) and Barreda and Bilgihan (2013), suggesting that the ‘room’ is the most for hotel guests. Other than the room, the conduct of ‘staff’ and the nature of human contact, i.e. ‘customer – employee interaction’ is also of considerable importance (Au, Buhalis, & Law, 2009). Guests tend to closely scrutinize the availability and quality of other services as well. While modern facilities, good tangibles and centrality of location in terms of convenient accessibility definitely win customer appreciation and compliments, the overall hotel stay experience seems to be actually evaluated with respect to the value for money.

The study concludes that quality of both tangible and service elements should be accorded equal importance by hoteliers as both are closely scrutinized by guests. Often what a hotelier may perceive as unimportant or trivial may in

reality be crucial for guest satisfaction. Hence, every minor dimension should be taken care of to please the guests so that a positive word-of-mouth is disseminated in favour of the image a hotel. In view of the importance and wide access of eWOM, the study has implications for hotel managers in highlighting the importance of user generated eWOM as the nature of content of guest reviews can be critical for the long term survival, success, or failure of a hotel in the present day competitive times. The customer service/relations department along with the marketing department should be actively involved in continuously monitoring guest feedback to get clues on enhancing the positively reported features and taking corrective measures in areas complained about. Given the limitation that this study has focused only on a small section of 3 Star hotels in Bangkok city, future research by hoteliers and academicians should be undertaken with a larger dataset for different category hotels in different tourist cities. Research aimed at specifically investigating the different types of hotel attributes important for different types of tourists (based on their country of origin, gender or economic background, etc.) can also provide a new tangent to studies on consumer satisfaction and hotel marketing.

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